

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 07151 171747Z
ACTION SS-25

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-----023288 171750Z /41
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0000
AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 7151

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN EG SY
SUBJECT: ASSAD'S REACTION TO SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

REF: DAMASCUS 7148

1. ASSAD HAS NOW GONE FIRMLY ON RECORD AGAINST
SADAT'S VISIT TO THE KNESSET IN PART TO EMPHASIZE THAT SADAT
DOES NOT ADDRESS THE KNESSET AND THE WORLD AS THOUGH HE
WERE SPEAKING FOR ALL THE ARABS AND IN PART TO ENSURE THAT
ASSAD'S CRITICS AT HOME AND ABROAD CANNOT ACCUSE HIM OF
COMPLICITY OR EVEN ACQUIESCENCE. (SADAT HAD EXPLICITLY
DISASSOCIATED ASSAD FROM PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF JERUSALEM
VISIT IN HIS OWN PRESS CONFERENCE HERE.)

2. ASSAD'S REMARKS AT PRESS CONFERENCE (REFTEL) WERE
BITTER BUT STOPPED SHORT OF PERSONAL ATTACK. SADAT HAS
SERIOUSLY EMBARRASSED ASSAD. THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN
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PLAYING UP THE THEME OF ARAB UNITY CONSISTENTLY IN RECENT
WEEKS AND PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANNI-
VERSARY OF ASSAD'S NOVEMBER 16 "CORRECTIVE MOVEMENT."
THE BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND AND THE PRESS HAVE
HAMMERED ON THE DANGERS OF INDEPENDENT ACTION BY ANY
ARAB STATE. ASSAD NO DOUBT FELT THAT THIS ARGUMENT WAS
A POWERFUL LEVER IN HIS HANDS TO KEEP SADAT FROM MAKING

TOO MANY CONCESSIONS PRIOR TO GENEVA. HIS PRESS CONFERENCE INDICATES THAT HE VIEWS KNESSET APPEARANCE IN ITSELF AS A VAST AND UNCALLED FOR CONCESSION TO ISRAEL.

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. ONCE AGAIN ASSAD SEES HIMSELF AS HAVING BEEN OUTFLANKED BY EGYPT WHICH, WITH US APPROVAL, HAS MOVED IN A WAY WHICH ASSAD CONSIDERS TO BE AGAINST ARAB INTERESTS AND A CHALLENGE TO SYRIAN LEADERSHIP. HIS OLD SUSPICIONS OF THE EGYPTIANS AND THE US WILL NOW BE HEIGHTENED. THIS HAS BEEN A FOREIGN POLICY SETBACK FOR ASSAD AND HE IS CLEARLY OFF BALANCE. ALTHOUGH WE TAKE AT FACE VALUE HIS INDICATION THAT NO FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN MADE RE SYRIAN ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA, WE SUSPECT SADAT'S MOVE HAS NOT RPT NOT MADE IT EASIER FOR ASSAD TO GO. MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

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